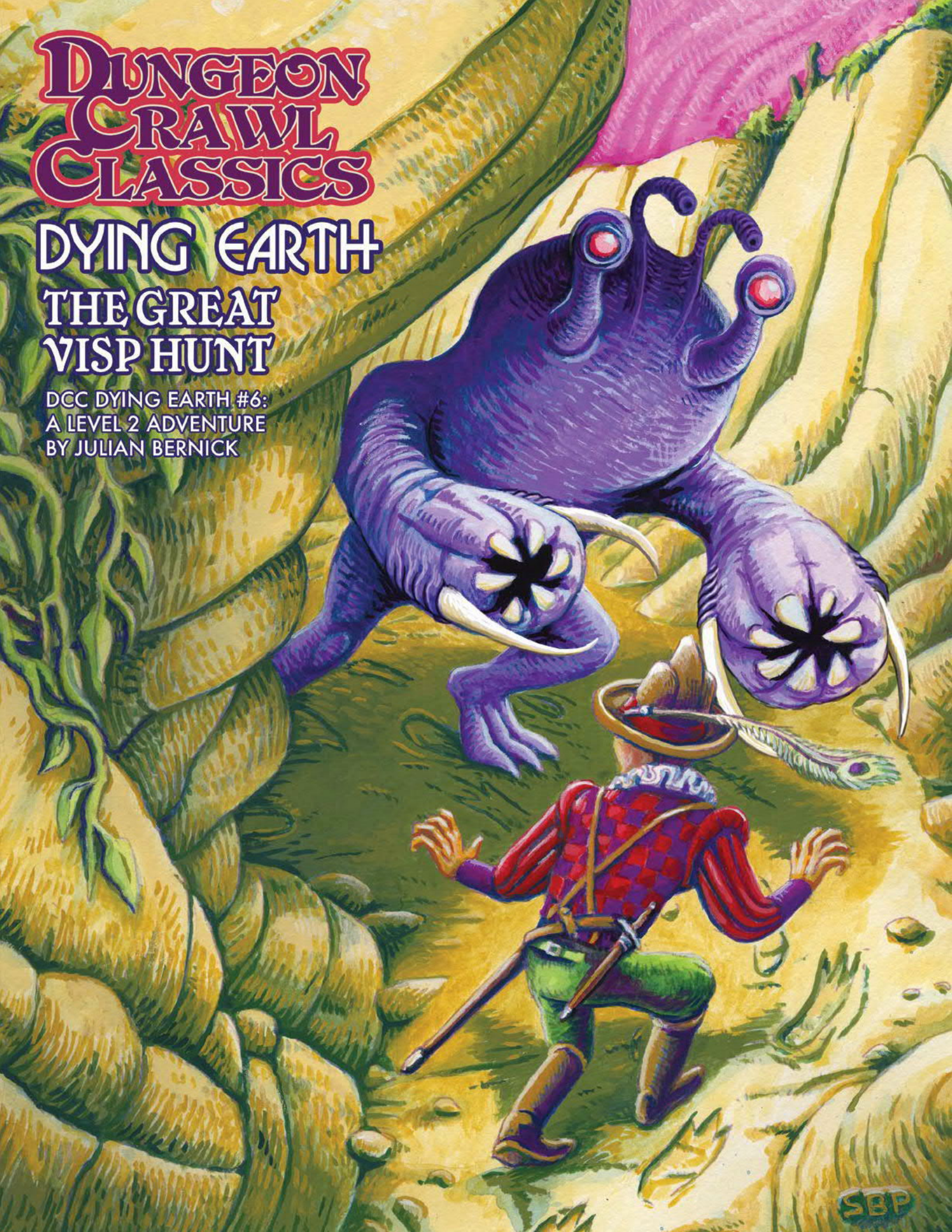



DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DYING EARTH

THE GREAT VISP HUNT

DCC DYING EARTH #6:
A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY JULIAN BERNICK





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DCC DYING EARTH #6

The Great Visp Hunt

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

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STEFAN

INTRODUCTION



The Great Visp Hunt is a wilderness adventure for 4 to 5 2nd-level characters that can take place in most parts of the dying Earth. It should serve as a stand-alone adventure session, but could also be woven into a group's travels toward another campaign goal (or away from offended parties in their last adventure). The adventure covers the group's motive to engage in the hunt, sundry adventures on the way to the denouement, and may provide surviving PCs with a motivation to visit their sentiments upon a pair of magicians who have duped them.

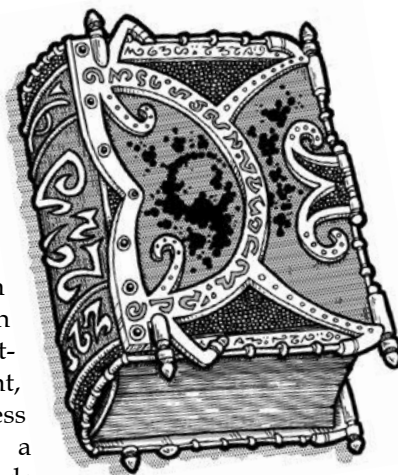
ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



The Great Visp Hunt is a classic setup of the PCs. In fact, in the tradition of Vancian self-serving and double-crossing, it is a double setup. Various notices in red ink (on ivory toned paper) are posted far and wide, summoning those of the utmost resourcefulness and mettle to expunge a visp from the environs of a remote village for a purse of 1000 terces. The hunt's sponsors are two obscure magicians, Darenrode the Red and Kamplygras the Immaculate.

In actuality, the various outcasts, adventurers and undesirables lured to the Village of the Dual Hues become the quarry—hunted by the young visps raised by the above-named magicians for this very purpose. In fact, a feud has persisted for the many decades since Kamplygras returned a borrowed libram to Darenrode with an unsightly ink stain. Ultimately, after solemn negotiations, animosities escalated and the two could not agree on whether the stain was

new. Now they no longer can agree on which book it was nor who borrowed what from whom, so they seek to settle their disagreements at the appointed interval with the Great Visp Hunt, now in its 67th year. In this grisly competition, each magician creates a vat-grown visp to attack the unsuspecting pawns drawn into the hunt, and each visp's kill of a hapless would-be visp-hunter tallies a point for its sponsor. Darenrode currently leads the feud, scheduled to go on for a total of 99 years, by a score of 126 to 112.



In addition to this deception, the PCs will learn the hard way that the local denizens know quite well that various moon-calves travel along this route at the appointed time each year, and they have their own designs upon these travelers. Note that it is important that the PCs have never seen a visp before, nor that they know with certainty what a visp looks like. They are doubtless familiar with its melancholy wail, at least through legend. The ambiguous nature and appearance of a visp is critical to the first encounter.

This adventure can be set in any remote area that is a significant journey from a populated center, typically in Ascolais, with the PCs having seen the notices in the white city of Kaiin, but any temperate, hilly and wooded environs should suit. Travel between the three main locations should take 1 to 4 days, though judges can alter this to fit their campaign as needed.

Further player motivations can be supplied as follows, either to the group or as individuals, potentially setting them at cross-purposes (in true Vancian fashion).

Assorted motives for engaging in the unusual pastime of visp-hunting:

- The PC has committed to the Collegium of Obscure Philosophies that they are the world's foremost visp expert, but in fact do not know even know what a visp looks like. They are due to present a monograph to the Collegium in 3 months.
- The PC is collecting the nose from every beast in the known world for an eccentric master, the illustrious magician Thrombedary.
- The PC is cursed to hunt monsters by the witch known as Mistress Akloun. The visp is the penultimate entry on the list of beasts they must defeat in order to be free of the curse.
- The PC has claimed to be a master hunter and now must return to the Society of Acclaimed Chasseurs with the horn of the visp or face their scorn.
- After having run afoul of a poaching ordinance in their home region, the PC has been commanded by the local prince to capture a visp, upon the proof of which their exile will be disburdened.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Darenrode the Red, a magician with a competitive spirit and grower of visp-things

Kamplygras the Immaculate, a white-clad magician and Darenrode's rival

Iytun, an obsequious schemer and hetman of the village Shlerb

Wasnee, Iytun's son, a shepherd boy and guide to Shlerb's environs

Phorio, a savant of visps captured by murids en route to the Village of Dual Hues

Thandos, a wayfarer impersonating Trennan, Duke of Saskervoy

Heetram, one of the Council of Two that governs the Village of the Dual Hues

Elzoon, one of the Council of Two that governs the Village of the Dual Hues

Gleyvar, a white-clad visp scout in the employ of the Council of Two

Otaro, a red-garbed visp scout in the employ of the Council of Two



ADVENTURE START

The notice posted at the taverns and inns throughout your most recent site of habitation read as follows:

"The Village of the Dual Hues is troubled by a remorseless visp. As selfless guardians of the village, the magicians Darenrode the Red and Kamplygras the Immaculate offer a purse of 1000 terces to those hardy enough to dispatch said visp while we are occupied with the esoteric and impenetrable problems befitting our station. Only the most courageous and resourceful are bidden to undertake this venture, avoiding deodands and other menaces until coming to the village and announcing your readiness to begin this dangerous but remunerative endeavor."

This notice in crimson ink stamped into an ivory-hued paper was affixed with two seals: a large red D and an outlined K. At the bottom, only the sparest and most ambiguous directions to the forenamed locale are provided.

After journeying several weeks and into the farthest reaches of this remote hill-country, you behold the first village espied in several days. Nestled in a valley of shrubs and smaller trees, including dymphne, black aspen, and mernache, the small hovels are clustered around a two-story structure that promises to house the village's authorities. Beyond the village are fenced pastures holding long-necked multi-colored beasts, grazing in their pasturage and tended by the figures of brightly-hatted locals.

As you approach, attractive and friendly youths, both male and female, begin to gather at the entrance to this humble hamlet, greeting you with a warm welcome.

The PCs have not found the Village of the Dual Hues but rather its predecessor on this road, the Village of Shlerb. The villagers, very aware of the PCs' destination, intend to fleece the PCs in two ways. First, the youths of the village

will make an act of welcoming them and showing them affection while assuring them that they must choose one of the two brightly colored hats that they offer. These colors will subject them to ridicule by the villagers, much to the delight of the youths, as well as force them to yet again buy new headwear to be considered "decent" in the village.

In addition to this, Iytun, the village Panjandrum, has an ongoing problem to resolve on behalf of his community. A passel of erbs has made their lair nearby the village's westernmost pasture. Iytun will seek to persuade the PCs that the erbs are actually visps, in order to have the PCs destroy them. Thus, all the villagers are quite content to let the PCs believe they have arrived at their destination.

VANCIAN GLOSSARY

Accouterments: equipment, often specific to a profession or function.

Chasseurs: hunters, or other seekers of prey.

Moon-calves: foolish and/or ignorant people.

Monograph: a learned treatise on a small area of learning.

Munificent: larger or more generous than is usually necessary.

Panjandrum: a powerful and usually pretentious personage, usually some sort of official.

Remunerative: profitable; providing monetary value.

Skulduggery: underhanded or unscrupulous behavior.

THE MANY-COLORED HATS OF SHLERB

The youths, both male and female, tend to wear long gray and tan smocks, belted at the middle, with sandals or boots depending on their wealth and station. Each youth wears a brimless fez-like hat colored in burgundy, ulfire, cerulean, russet, viridian, rose, ebony, or violet.

The youths insist on selling the PCs hats in a variety of styles, including smaller and larger tops, some adorned with tassels or embroideries, but all those available for purchase are of a teal or mauve coloring (despite the fact that the youths wear none of these colors). They tell the PCs that hats are required in the village (true) and that to walk without a head-covering is tantamount to the most immodest nakedness (also true). What they don't tell the PCs is that the colors denote a villager's station and other qualities—teal indicates the wearer is deficient in cognitive ability and must be supervised at all times, while mauve indicates the wearer has been indiscreet in their romantic and behavioral hygiene. If the PCs buy these hats for the small sum of 1 groat each, with notable surcharges for tassels and supplementary features, the youths giggle and disappear into the village, where the locals will experience mirth as they watch the PCs journey forth with such ridiculous headgear.

The youths also promise that the village has many excellent visp-hunting devices to aid the PCs: visp-calls, visp-lures, visp-pheromones, and any other visp-related accouterments the judge can conceive (unfortunately all worthless).

The road-weary PCs may seek respite at Shlerb's one tavern, run by the Panjandrum Iytun (who wears the village's only silver hat). During their journey into the village, the locals laugh and snicker at any PCs wearing mauve or teal hats; those going hatless inspire a stronger reaction, with women immediately fleeing their presence and men striking a surly pose to guard their hovels against such loose morals.

Iytun, a jovial bald man with a short pig-nose and heavy sideburn-covered jowls, welcomes the PCs, and invites them to dine with his family on hog-apple wine, qem's-heart stew, and other local delicacies. Trying to restrain his mirth, Iytun offers to sell yet more brightly colored hats to the PCs, of course for yet another groat each, and begs excuse for the youths of the village, who like to play these traditional but harmless pranks on unwary travelers.

After the repast, Iytun tells the PCs of the "visps" that have taken up residence in the forest just west of the qem pastures. Lately, the visps have been wrecking the pasture fences and abducting the long-necked qems straight out of the pastures and carrying them back to their nearby lair. If asked how these visps appear, Iytun (and all of the locals) are extremely vague, mentioning only the melancholy wails that precede the predations of the monsters. If the villagers are pressed on this topic, some will mention horns, tentacles, claws, glowing eyes, fins, fangs and almost any monstrous anatomy that can be imagined, as none of them have seen either the erbs terrorizing the qem pastures or an actual visp. Iytun will assign his son, the young shepherd Wasnee, to show the PCs the qem pasturage.

Judge's note: In playtests, some players enjoyed lots of hat skullduggery, others less so. Hat intrigue can consume a surprising amount of time! Thus, judges should extend, compress, or elide the hat encounter as makes sense for their game session(s).

General Features of Shlerb: The village is comprised of about 100 unsophisticated men, women, and progeny. The dog-sized long-necked six-legged qem are unique to Shlerb; elsewhere, a few pairs might fetch a good price wherever livestock is valued. Their brightly-colored woolen fur provides the colors of the village hats.

The villagers are a quiet, untrusting lot and have had many encounters with prospective visp-hunters. They refer all business to Iytun and generally avoid interactions with the PCs unless specifically delegated by the Panjandrum. The fighting-age males will certainly defend the village and have found some not inconsiderable wealth in punishing troublesome travelers in the past. The average one-room hovel contains a few useful household items and 2d10 groats hidden behind a hearthstone or in an old clay cup.

Located above the tavern, the more spacious upstairs apartment of Iytun contains 118 terces in an unlocked wooden chest, along with the various visp-hunting brummagem he has found it useful to sell. There is also a banal collection of almanacs, village records, and other appropriate goods.

Villagers of Shlerb (40): Init +1; Atk staff +1 melee (1d4) or hurled stone +1 missile fire (1d4, range 10/20/30'); AC 10; HD 1d4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/d6.

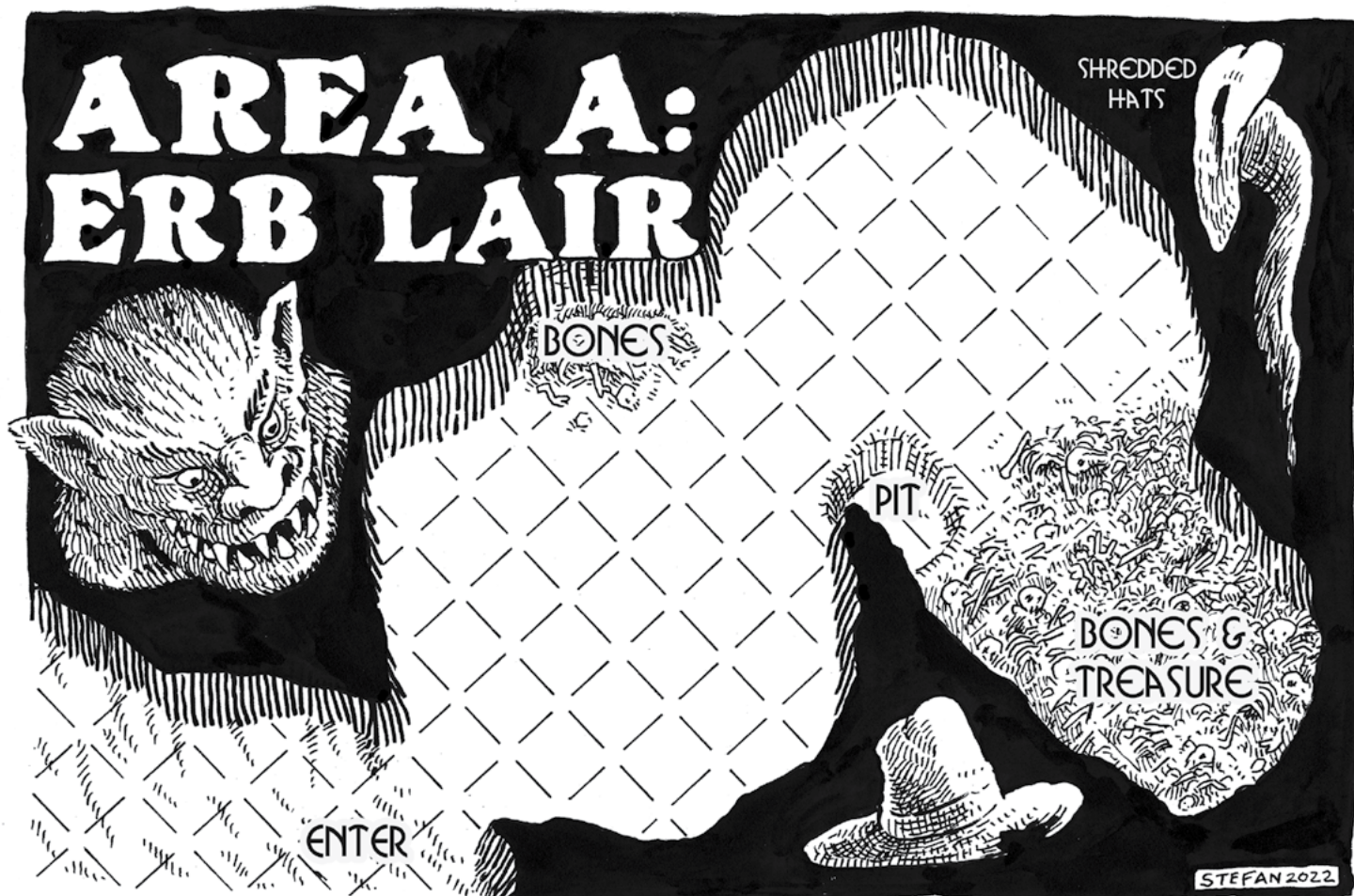
The Pastures of Shlerb: The roughly three dozen qem are penned within rickety makeshift fencing that keeps them from wandering away, but barely repels resourceful predators. If shown to the qem pastures, Wasnee will indicate the direction of the supposed visp-lair, as well as where the fence was clearly battered down (though now repaired in a somewhat slovenly fashion).

The thick scrub, consisting mostly of spurge and mo-wood, certainly shows signs of being traversed. There are some brightly colored qem hairs on the thorny bushes of spike-nard nearby, as well as large bipedal tracks, which can be found with a DC 14 Intelligence check. There is also a lingering odor in the area, somewhat acidic and nauseating—the remainder of erb stench—which will be instantly recognizable to any who have encountered erbs before.

The llama-like qem are docile, and croak in a fashion more reminiscent of frogs than sheep when picked up or attacked. They only fight in extreme circumstances.

Qem (50): Init +1; Atk head-butt +1 melee (1d4) or bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d5; hp 5 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL N; Crit M/d8.

Area A – Erb Lair: Each night, two of the three erbs will come to the pasture, break the fence and seek to carry off two or three qem. During the day, they sleep in their nearby cave, one hour's journey hence. The horrible erb-stench grows more and more intense as PCs approach the lair, and indeed the PCs can easily "follow their nose" to the source.



The erbs attack anyone entering their lair. There is a naturally occurring pit near the western wall of the rear chamber, a place where some bones have fallen in. Without bright light, anyone moving through this area must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid slipping into this pit full of splintered bones and gristle, and those who fail take 1d6 points of damage from the fall. The erb-dung and other rotting waste will also cover the unfortunate stumblebum who falls into the pit, requiring a DC 15 Fortitude save to not be overcome by the noxious effluvia; failure imparts a -1d penalty to all actions until the PC spends a full turn cleaning themselves off.

The deepest chamber of the erb-lair contains the bones of a dozen qem, worthless remnants of bloody qem-wool and the remains of three unlucky herders, one of whom wore an inherited ring with a pelgrane-engraved vaul-stone seal worth 5 terces. There are also a few shredded hats, namely a cerulean fez, a turquoise sombrero, and the bloodstained remnants of a once-fashionable chartreuse pillbox, along with the mostly eaten leather coat of a wayfarer, whose one intact pocket holds a vial of ossip wax (see Appendix E of the *Intimate Anatomy of Several Creatures and Personages of the Twenty-First Aeon*), with remnant enough to cover one pair of boots.

Erbs (3): Init +1; Atk claw +5 melee (1d6+2) or bite +5 melee (1d3 plus paralysis) or hurled spine +4 missile fire (1d7+2, range 30'); AC 12; HD 2d8+2; hp 13,11,10; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP paralysis (DC 10 Fort save or paralyzed for 1d4 rounds), olfactory acuity, detachable spines, ursine ef-

fluxation, magical hybrid traits; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C; Crit DN/d4.

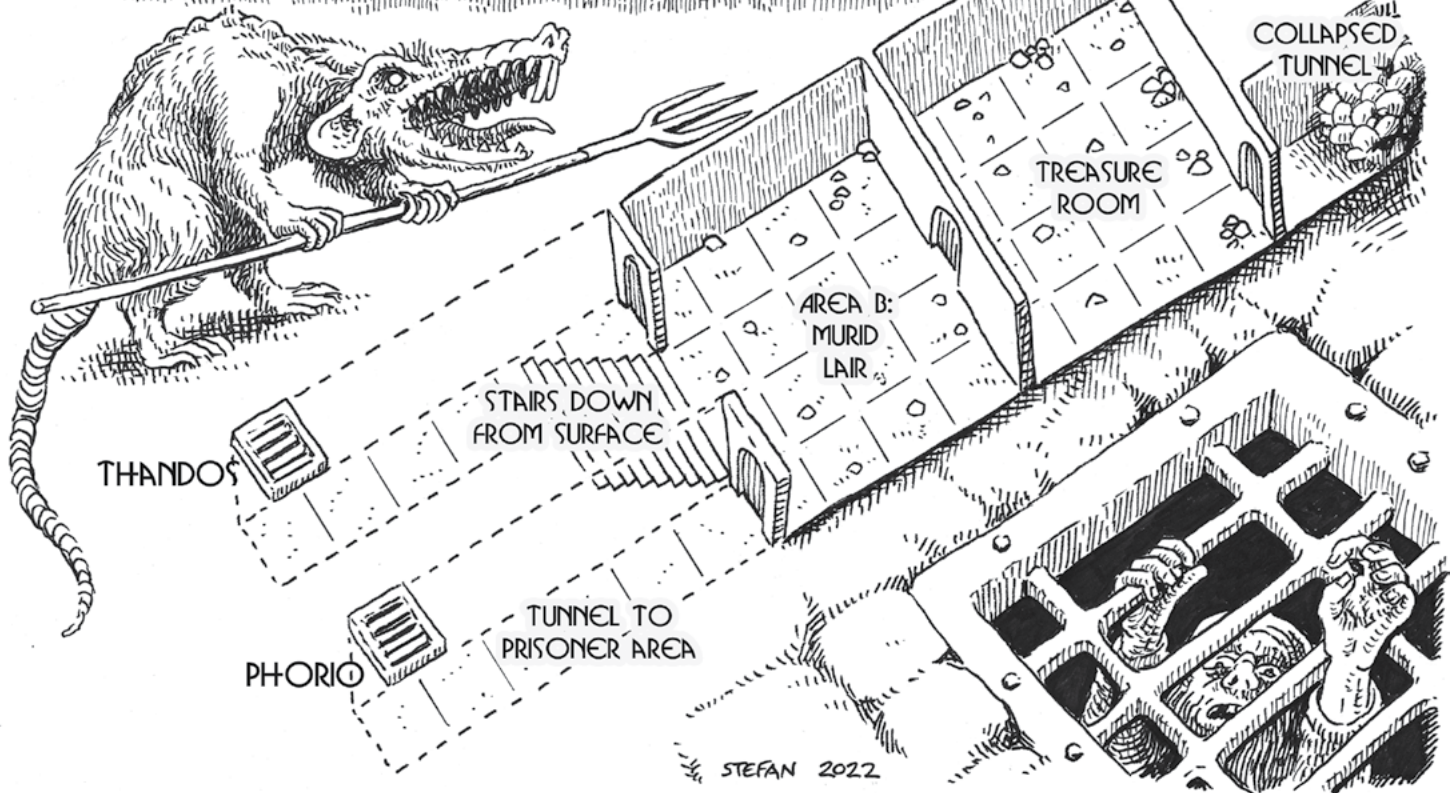
All creatures within 100' of the erb are able to smell its foul musk; all creatures within 10' must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or suffer a -1d penalty to all actions for the next 1d4 rounds while gagging and choking.

As magical hybrids, erbs have infravision of 60' and have an improved critical threat range of 19-20. In addition, their sorcerous legacy grants them a natural defense against magic: they have a 25% chance to resist all magic, regardless of level or caster, and gain a +8 on saves against spells that do affect them.

After the Hunt: If the PCs slay the erbs and do not realize that they are not visps, Iytun wishes them well and sends them along the road to visit the manses of Darenrode and Kamplygras, at which places they should present the erb-heads for their bounty.

If the ruse is discovered, Iytun pleads ignorance at first, falling back on the excuse of being poor unsophisticated villagers, hardly familiar with such exotic monstrosities. If the PCs are more vengeful than that, Iytun offers them his sincere apologies for the antics of the village youths, a variety of brightly colored hats and 50 terces that the village has saved for a special event such as this. If properly intimidated or desperate, Iytun can be negotiated up to 118 terces, the amount in the communal store. Iytun believes in always preserving appearances and persisting in a lie, but of

INTERLUDE: STAIRWAY TO THE RAT-FOLK



course will throw himself on the mercy of a PC if no other mode of survival presents itself. The men of the village will follow his lead, but prefer to avoid conflict with magicians, witches, et al., if possible.

INTERLUDE: STAIRWAY TO THE RAT-FOLK

After several more days of tramping through the wilderness, you find that the road leading away from the monster-haunted village traverses an area grown more heavily forested. Rare woods like harquisade and dymphne vie with black aspens and brown hurse for the light of the bloated red sun. The forest is still except for the occasional skittering of lank-lizards and the vapid muttering of tree-ferrets.

Suddenly the placidity is broken by a long piercing wail... the note rises to a soaring crescendo then descends down into a deep ominous basso rumble. Your blood chills as you hear what might very well be the famed (and infamous) melancholy wail of the visp! But the mood is broken as you hear a man clearing his throat suddenly and inviting you forward. "Attention! Urgent help is required for a true duke of Saskervoy!"

If the PCs take the bait, they find two iron-barred windows set in the turf, each having a man staring up through it and trying to capture their attention. The first cell contains Phorio, an aspiring wizard. The second holds Thandos, a wayfarer impersonating the Most Regal Duke Trennan, a nobleman of Saskervoy. Both are covered in mud, unshaven and

desperate to lure PCs down the nearby stone steps into the lair of the murids who have captured them.

The murids are rat-like creatures who feed on the unfortunate humans whom they capture. They have set out Phorio and Thandos as bait; whichever is able to lure four more humans down into the murid lair is entitled to freedom, so each will implore the PCs to descend the nearby stairs to the lair and to give them credit for making this injudicious choice.

Lean, pale Phorio had set out to hunt visps, just as the PCs have, but ran afoul of the murids while camping and was imprisoned. Phorio studied visps and learned to imitate the wail of the visp from several visp-hunters native to the Land of the Falling Wall. Anyone taking 1 hour to learn this impressive wail can make other visps give up one action in a round in which they successfully mimic it (DC 12 Personality check to execute it properly). Phorio will ask the PCs to journey down the steps to find the heavy iron door that has secured his cell. All they must do is pry it open to free him, and thence gain all his visp-lore.

Corpulent and garrulous Thandos is well-spoken and has expertly imitated Duke Trennan for several months as he sought to assemble a small fighting force for various military intrigues within Almerly (or whatever locale is most appropriate to the campaign). The judge should make a Luck check for any wayfarers in the party to see if they recognize Thandos from a prior scheme that ended in disaster (the judge should randomly determine whether Thandos, the PC, or neither came out on top of this fiasco.) Thandos will

promise to richly reward any PC who journeys down the stairs and frees him from the tiny rat-creatures who imprisoned him, claiming that they are but six inches tall and may be kicked over as easily as ant-hills.

Both will implore the PCs to announce their sponsor as they journey down the stairs. ("Say you come to strike for the Duke of Saskervoy!" "Say rather that you seek visp younglings, in service to Phorio the Munificent!")

The iron-barred grills can be pulled up by a DC 20 Strength check, freeing either prisoner. Either one could make an excellent replacement character or supplement for the PCs in case of untimely expiration.

Area B – Murid Lair: In the event that PCs are unwise enough to move down the stone stairs into the basement level of what is an aeons-old sunken installation of inscrutable purpose, they will be set upon by a legion of murids who seek to subdue them and reconcile the competition between Phorio and Thandos according to a system of the judge's discretion. During combat in this dingy installation, there is a 5% chance each round that one murid will be swallowed up from below by a pale white light from a mysterious sub-world or vat-grown entity of unspecified motives, never to be seen again.

Among their dirty matted furs, dung-piles, and manacles, the murids have collected various prizes from the many travelers they've captured: a rapier, a longsword, an arrow-gun (11 arrows), a battle-hook, and a mace, as well as a corselet, a suit of scuffed and damaged brass armor (only +4 AC until repaired), a pouch of marbles that also holds four zamanders (worth 250 terces total), and the spellbook of Phorio, which contains the following spells: *The Charm of Untiring Nourishment*, *Lugwiler's Dismal Itch*, *Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth*, and *Rhialto's Green Turmoil*. Scattered throughout the piles of goods are a total of 111 terces and 358 groats, along with dozens of other ancient coins of unknown mint.

A doorway from the treasure room leads to a corridor that has caved in. Enterprising judges may choose to let the PCs clear it and entertain them with challenges of their own devising; otherwise, the debris-filled corridor is impassable.

Murid (Rat-folk) (20): Init +3; Atk trident +3 melee or missile fire (1d6, range 20/40/60') or bite +3 melee (1d3 plus disease); AC 14; HD 2d3; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP disease (DC 11 Fort save or additional 2d3 damage), detestable stench (melee opponents suffer -1 penalty to attacks), degloving escape (escapes restraint by shedding tail's outer layer), stealthy (+2d bonus to stealth/ambush checks), infravision 30'; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; AL L; Crit III/d8.

Phorio (Magician): Init +0; Atk by weapon or spell; AC 10; HD 1d4+1d6; hp 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP magician abilities (currently no memorized spells); SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; AL N; Crit I/d8.

Thandos (a.k.a. the Most Regal Duke Trennan of Saskervoy) (Wayfarer): Init +2; Atk by weapon or spell; AC 12; HD 1d4+1d8; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP wayfarer abilities; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; AL C; Crit III/d6.

THE VILLAGE OF THE DUAL HUES

The traversed landscape has changed over the past several days, becoming less wooded, and transitioning to grassy hills interspersed with rocky bluffs. The tidy burgh in the valley below appears to be roughly two or three times the size of the last town you encountered, and remarkably placid.

The people of the village are hauling sticks and pushing some surly oasts into sturdy barns and give no sign of observing you. Notably, the villagers are all garbed in one of two ways: either in a severe red vest with matching pantaloons and crimson-dyed boots, or in a long white cassock and cowl, the gown belted just below the waist with a heavy rope. The hovels you can see in the village are also brightly painted either white or crimson.

In the distance, situated on a tall bluff some half-league away is a striking crimson-hued mansion, with a tall red tower rising from the far side. To the west, you spot a similar tower crowned with a sphere, all made of white stone. The rest of the structure is hidden from view.

This sedate village is populated by two hereditary factions: those (in white) dedicated at birth to Kamplygras and those (in red) dedicated at birth to Darenrode. The factions coexist peacefully, though the rivalry and competition are sometimes intense. The inhabitants are ruled in everything by the Council of Two, being the highest-ranking matriarchs of each faction, and who represent the interests of their sponsors. The peace, though sometimes uneasy, is complete, as Darenrode and Kamplygras have no wish to be dragged into the arbitration of missing fowls and the property lines of hovels. Thus, the Council of Two adjudicate all things, and their mutual agreement is law. When the PCs enter the village, the residents welcome them and assure them that indeed, they are in the Village of Dual Hues and tell them not to worry, for no faction is privileged over another.

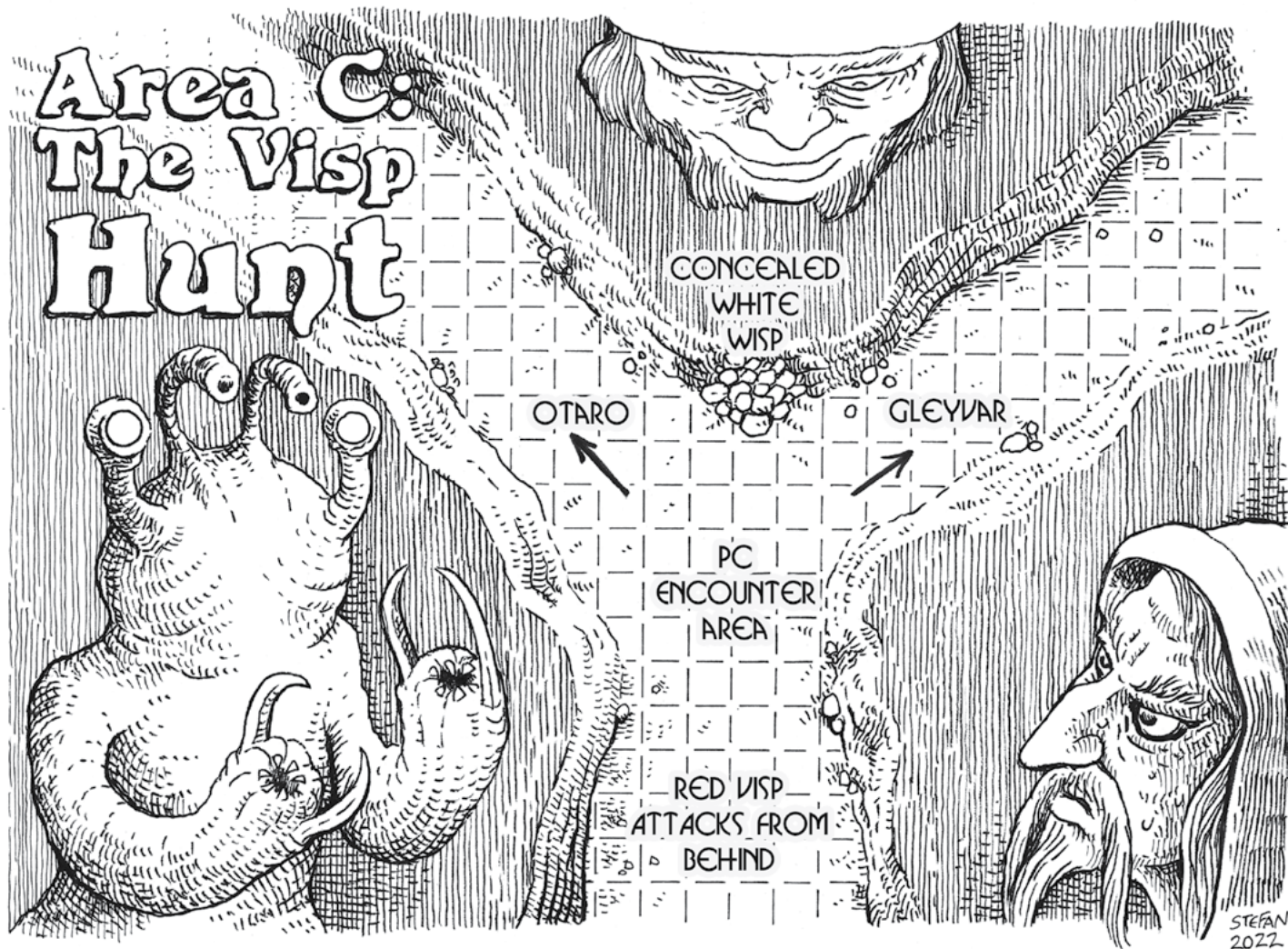
The PCs will be led to the Council of Two, the wily narrow-faced Heetram (in white) and her counterpart, the obstreperous and hirsute Elzoon (in red). They will laugh at any prior misadventures but assure the PCs they have come to the right place now and, for a change, greet the PCs with comfortable accommodations and a hearty repast of stuffed fowl in rose syrup, fried dandelions, and seared mushrooms, accompanied by three dusty bottles of fine fazola. After a decorous entertainment and set of pleasantries, the Council will urgently request the PCs undertake the mission for which they have reported.

Of course, the Council secretly knows that there are no visps to hunt. Rather, they intend to have two visp-guides take the PCs out into the bluffs at the appointed time so that the magicians may loose their visps and then watch the hunt proceed from the security and comfort of their tower-tops.

Dressed all in white, Gleyvar is rotund, bald, and surprisingly fleet of foot. Red-garbed Otaro is lean, sullen, and mirthless. They have led many PCs to their dooms in this manner and answer questions as gingerly and as vaguely as possible. No matter what the PCs suggest, the two guides







will insist on taking the PCs to the “Exact locale in which marauding visps are most frequently seen, at the hour just after dusk, their most harmonious and dreadful time of wailing.”

In the case that wary PCs sense duplicity and refuse to play along, the villagers become vengeful and aggressive; they fear the displeasure of their masters. If all else fails, the villagers may even lock themselves up in their homes while the visps are dispatched to hunt the PCs in the (abandoned) village’s central inn.

Besides these intrigues and the brightly painted hovels, the village is otherwise pedestrian. The purse of 1000 terces is split evenly between the two residences of Heetram and Elzoon. All the villagers have an additional 1d4 terces and 2d10 groats in their residence. At the judge’s discretion, a PC looting a village hovel might make a Luck check to find a curio, weapon, or other useful object.

Villagers of the Dual Hues: Init +1; Atk club +1 melee (1d4) or sling +1 missile fire (1d4, range 40/80/160’); AC 10; HD 1d4; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/d6.

Gleybar and Otaro (visp-guides): Init +0; Atk mace (Gleyvar) or short sword (Otaro) +1 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 35’; Act 1d20; SP perfect knowledge of

environs; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N; Crit II/d7.

Area C – The Visp Hunt: At the prescribed hour, Gleyvar and Otaro take the PCs up to the white and dun-colored rock formations hollowed out by the 10- to 12-foot-deep gullies within. Soon the visps are encountered!

Upon reaching a Y-shaped intersection, the melancholy wail of the visp is heard at last! It sounds close, but where is the noise coming from? As you ponder this question the loose rock shale shatters and what might – what must – be a visp appears directly in front of you! In a split second, you see the horror is a barrel-trunked creature on stubby legs, waving long tentacle arms tipped with flat paddles bearing wicked looking horns. Glowing rose-colored eyestalks twitch atop the visp’s trunk as it approaches and two ridged scalp-crests rise from the top of that body, from which wave two proboscises. But most notably, you see this monstrous horror is wearing a bright white garment around its thick trunk as it rears to attack you!

The visp, carefully concealed in the loose rock and shale of the bluff’s rockface in the gully automatically surprises the PCs.

Gleyvar and Otaro flee at the first sight of the fearsome beast (said behavior is perhaps not in and of itself suspicious!), but may visit predations upon a weakened survivor or two if they feel that the odds are strongly in their favor. High in

their towers, the magicians watch the pitched battle below, tallying their visps' kills and undoubtedly preparing to dispute their counterpart's scoring.

The red-garbed visp of Darenrode attacks immediately in the following round from behind the PCs, gaining its own round of surprise.

Adolescent visps (2): Init +3; Atk arm-bludgeons +3 melee (2d6); AC 14; HD 4d8+2; hp 30 each; Act 2d20; SP melancholy moan (all hearers within 100' must make a DC 15 Will save or suffer -1d penalty to all attacks), bloodsucking (on successful attack victim is punctured by the maxillae, 1d4 Stamina loss per round until freed with DC 16 Strength check), infravision 200', immune to surprise; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N; Crit M/d10.

These recently vat-generated visps are somewhat less dangerous than those found in the wild. The rules of the magicians' contest postulate that each may only be gestated for nine months, and so far, the magicians' visp-creations in this timeframe are roughly equal. Vat-thing PCs will immediately sense that they are magical hybrids, but may also intuit on a DC 10 Intelligence check that these were recently generated from the vats of magicians.

Upon hearing the wails of the visp, PCs must make a DC 15 Will save or be at a -1d penalty to all attacks. This also applies to the wailing of the second visp, but those already affected do not incur an additional iterative penalty.

The visp's long tentacle-arms terminate in large paddles, in the center of which are spiked maxillae (perhaps a visp's

"horn"). On a successful attack, the visp pierces a foe and drains blood (causing a loss of 1d4 points of Stamina per round while the maxilla is attached). Breaking free of this requires a DC 14 Strength check.

The visp sees via its glowing eyestalks and smells via the proboscises on its crests; it is impossible to surprise and has infravision. If PCs flee the visps, either or both will pursue; their only purpose is to maximize the number of kills in service to their sponsors.

EPILOGUE

PCs that survive this challenging encounter will probably deduce the true aims of the Great Visp Hunt and understand that they have been set up. Survivors returning to the Village of the Dual Hues may claim their purse of 1000 terces (unless the judge decrees that Gleyvar, Otaro, and the Council of Two decide to ambush them and lay claim to the prize themselves...).

Whether they aim to take their revenge on the Village of the Dual Hues or attempt the manse of either Darenrode or Kamplygras (or both), the PCs will have their work cut out for them. If an abundance of judges enthusiastically request further details of the relevant magicians' manses, it is possible that Goodman Games will publish more material in this vein—perhaps before our own solar eminence has turned into the bloated and angry red sun that Rhialto and his associates would recognize as their own.

Playtesters: Premier Visp Chasseurs: Trevor Hartman, Heather Lidholm, Svebor Midzic, operyion, Dan Steeby; Cyclops Con 2020: Dave Aughinbaugh, Jack Derricourt, Erol Otus, Charlie Vick, Michael Williams; Con of Champions 2020: Steve Barnett, Jacob L, Michael Nusbaum, Scot Ryder, Sandor Silverman; DCC Days Online 2020: John Merle Holes, Anna S. Horvath, Wolf Manzella, David Persinger, Chris Rice; Alba Con 2021: Julian Hayley, Christopher Messemore, Sam Nicholson, Michael Nusbaum, Cory Welch; GameHole Con 2021 Team Friday: Paul Bachleda, Keith Nelson, Eric Netteberg, Sofie Netteberg, Paul Smith; GameHole Con 2021 "We Killed Our Own Visp": Tom Colley, Steph Groon, John Hadd, R. Bryan Rumble, Chris Zank; Virtual Visp Seekers of Calgary: Judge Trevor Russ, Chris Jolley, Travis Neff, Mike Runcie, Paul Schipitsch, Terry Zimmerman; Keller's Visp Killers: Judge Will Keller, Paden Lauber, Andrew Lyon, Tristan Mohs, Marc Plourde.

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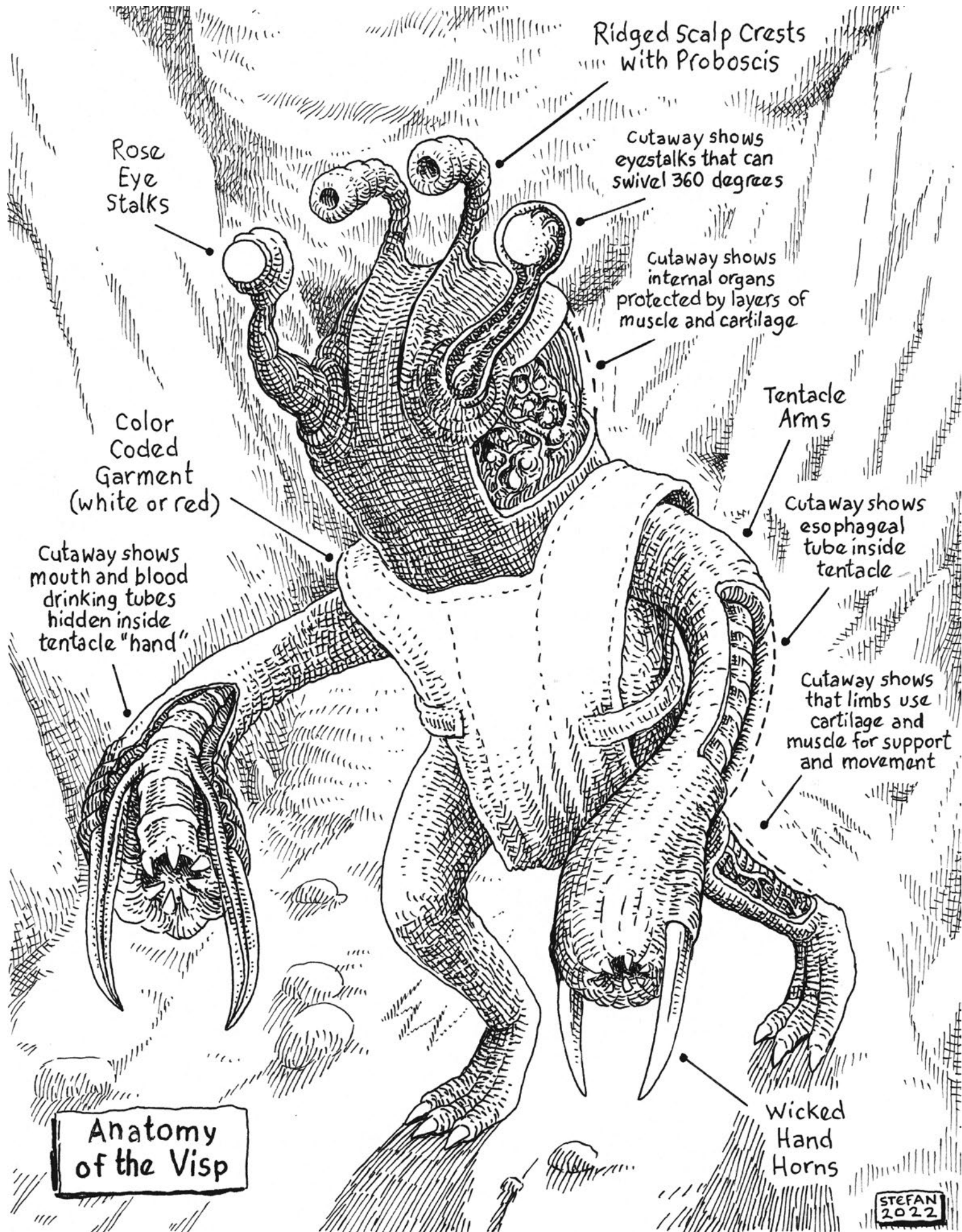
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tentacle "hand"

Tentacle
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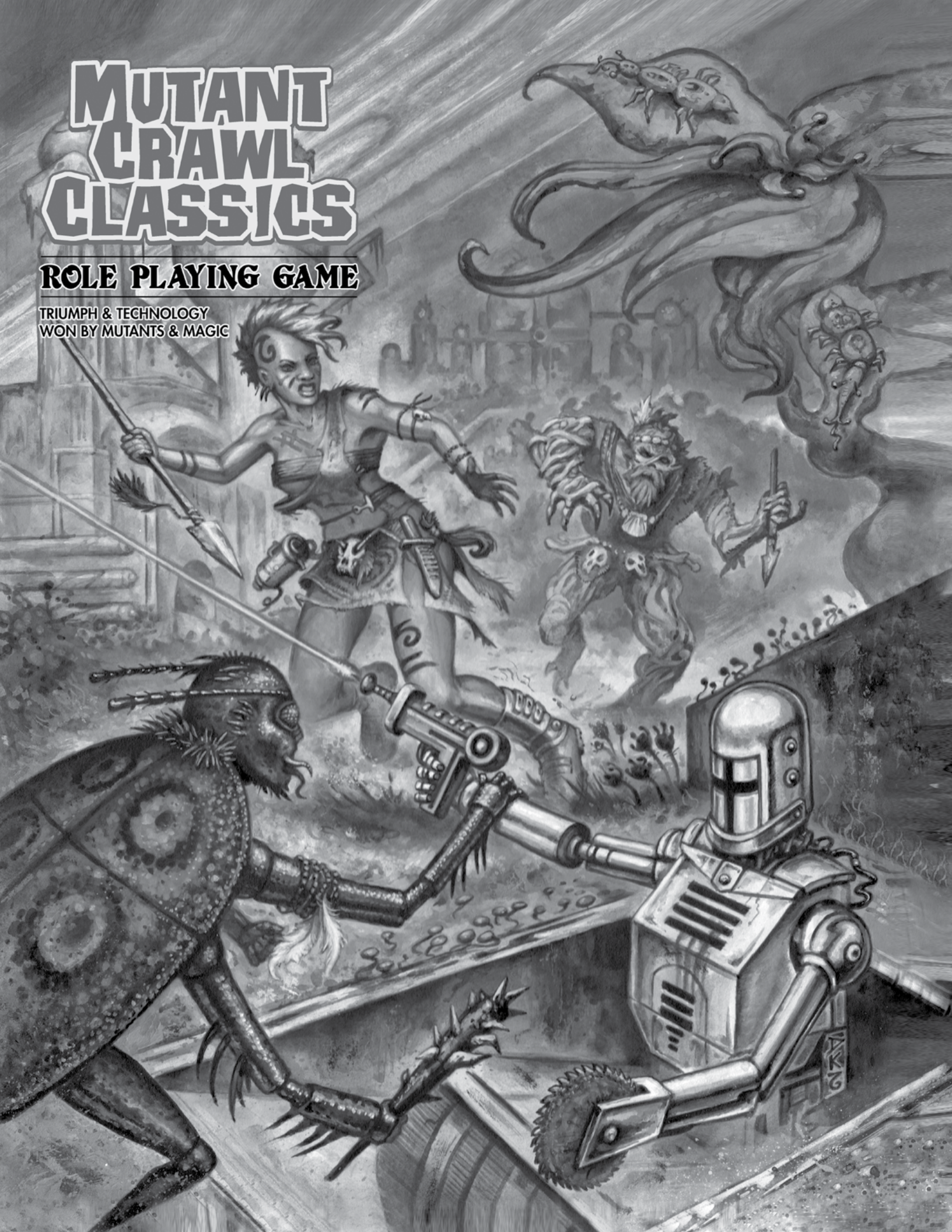
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